



SUPPORTING QUALITY EMPLOYMENT SOLUTIONS

REPORT OF THE NEBRASKA

State Rehabilitation Council

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State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education

December, 2002

To the Citizens of the State of Nebraska:

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is pleased to present to you the 2002 Annual Report. The SRC has continued to work closely with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to improve and expand employment services for individuals with disabilities in Nebraska. Our year started a few weeks following the horrific and tragic events of September 11. Our love for our fellow Americans and for our country strengthened our resolve to work together to promote employment opportunities for those who experience disabilities.

Working in partnership with VR, the SRC continued to review and develop the State Plan. During the year the Council was involved in the following:

- **Workforce Investment Act (WIA).** The SRC continued to keep themselves informed on WIA. Workforce Development Centers have opened across the state with VR involved in each center. VR has received referrals from all of the one stop centers and is actively working with mutual consumers.

- **Transition.** Intense effort in the area of Transition Planning in the schools continued with an emphasis on early student planning. The council supported VR's effort to clearly identify their role in transition so consistent services would be provided across the state.

- **Individual Plan for Employment (IPE).** A new process for developing the IPE was started to engage consumers earlier in the process and empower them to make informed decisions. The new process will create a statewide standardized approach and ensure more effective and efficient delivery of services.

- **Initial Interviews.** The process for conducting initial interviews with consumers was revised so when consumers leave the initial interview, they know who can help them and the next steps that will be taken.

VR and SRC will continue to work together to identify employment solutions and improve the quality of life for those with disabilities in Nebraska.

God bless Voc Rehab. God bless Nebraska. God bless America.

Susan L. Gieschen

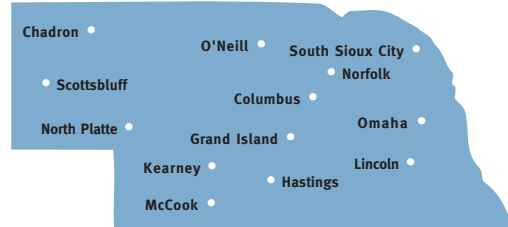
Susan L Gieschen, Chairperson
Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council

“I told them I didn’t want to be on disability the rest of my life and that I wanted to be more productive.”

DeAngela Swain
Ralston High School

Council Accomplishments

The State Rehabilitation Council provided input on and/or made the following recommendations to Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation during the 2001/2002 year:



Vocational Rehabilitation Office Locations

- In a continuing effort to get client input, the SRC developed a short consumer satisfaction survey to be used after consumers complete the agency ‘Orientation’ to VR services. The ‘Orientation’ is a formal presentation given to each consumer who is interested in VR services. The SRC asked the agency to begin using the survey and suggested methods for distributing and gathering it.

The offices began using the instrument in the summer and the results were reviewed by the SRC. The results indicated:

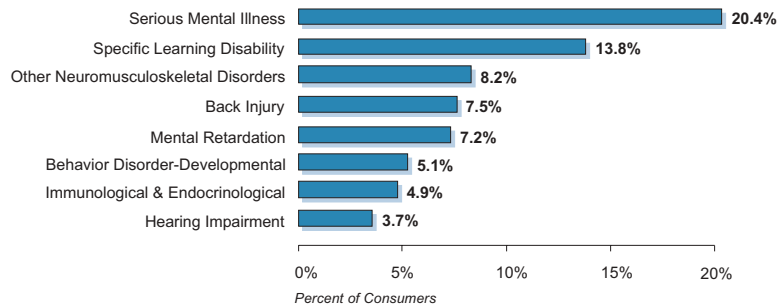
- 1) three weeks is too long to wait to get into orientation
- 2) consumers are overwhelmingly satisfied with the presentation
- 3) employment warranty information was the most helpful
- 4) consumers would like more information on training/school.



DeAngela Swain knows what she wants. Thanks to Voc Rehab, she has the resources and support to get it.

“I told them I didn’t want to be on disability the rest of my life,” says Swain. At Voc Rehab, Swain used a variety of resources to find and prepare for her new job as Registrar at Ralston High School. “Without Voc Rehab I would probably still be sitting at home wondering what I was going to do next because they gave me initiative and also the encouragement ...there is a future for me and I don’t have to be on disability all my life. ...They were always there and willing to help. That’s what I appreciate.”

LEADING CAUSES OF IMPAIRMENT



- To improve outreach, the SRC recommended taking a look at referral information from other agencies and identifying where referrals are coming from and which of these referral sources tend to have referrals that achieve employment outcomes.

- In order to improve relationships with referral sources, the SRC recommended a survey be developed.

- The SRC asked VR to review how many consumers have opted out of the process before a plan was developed and the reasons why.

- The SRC provided input and was supportive of the transition efforts

by VR to increase awareness of VR services for students, parents and the schools. These efforts include a Transition Newsletter, Memorandum of Understanding with the schools, and development of a Transition Services Planner.

- After reviewing some controversial language, SRC supported the Memorandum of Understanding between VR and the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

- Because of the population trend in rural areas the SRC recommended that VR look at self-employment or non-traditional outcomes for people in rural areas.

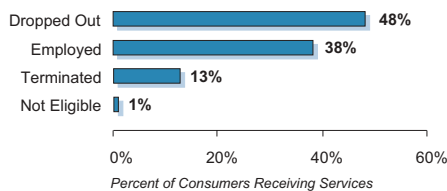
“Without Voc Rehab,” Welding says, “I don’t know if I would’ve been able to get the job because of what they did to help me.”

Darin Welding
Sears

SUCCESS STORY

Starting with Voc Rehab while he was still in high school prepared Darin Welding for a retail sales position at Sears. VR’s main focus was making sure Welding studied and stayed in school until graduation in 1994. Since then, Voc Rehab has provided a variety of services from installing a wheelchair lift in his van, to interviewing and resume assistance, on-going support and job matching. Now he’s been at Sears for two years and is going to college to study computer networking.

OUTCOMES



Darin Welding
Sears



"We came up with the idea that it might be possible to make an instrument that could be played with one hand."

Dr. David Nabb
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Before the spring of 2000, Dr. David Nabb spent most of his time teaching private woodwind lessons and performing professionally—until his career was derailed by a stroke. When he first started working with Keri Bennett at Voc Rehab, "We came up with the idea that it might be possible to make an instrument that could be played with one hand," he says. A customized saxophone makes it possible for Nabb to keep working in the field he loves. Assistive technology gave him an alternate way to play the saxophone and teach his students. Voc Rehab paid to develop the prototype, using a student-line horn. With Voc Rehab and assistive technology, people with disabilities can live and work independently and successfully.



Dr. David Nabb
University of Nebraska

Message from Frank C. Lloyd

Director of Vocational Rehabilitation

Our Resources May Be Limited—But Our Creativity is Not!

When organization resources are scarce there is the inclination for staff to hunker down, maintain a low profile, and wait for better times. But this is also an excellent time to take creative action — to change, innovate and improve performance. Limited resources do not limit our ability to be creative. In fact, when we are trying to stretch limited resources we stimulate our creativity and often discover new possibilities that were not apparent during "better times". Albert Einstein said, "Creativity is more powerful than knowledge". In this statement he affirmed that his knowledge of the universe could not have led him to the Theory of Relativity. It was only through imagining "something impossible" that his thinking was open to understand and formulate the unknown.

Since 1995 we have not increased our staff, and our program funds have increased only slightly to maintain pace with the cost of living index.

NEBRASKA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM 2002

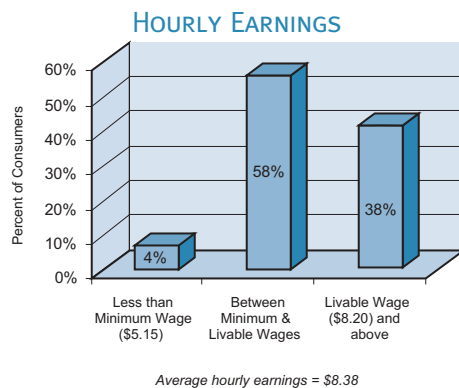
	# people
Applied for services	3,933
Eligible for services	3,407
Started services	2,365
Received services	7,780
Transition	136
Employment	1,490
Employment Warranty	222
Continuing in services	3,078
Success Rate	63%

Yet, since 1995 we have nearly doubled the number of consumers who have been successfully employed through our three major employment programs: Students with disabilities through our Transition Initiative program; adults in the traditional Employment program; and consumers advancing in careers through our Employment Warranty program.

In 1995 doubling our employment outcomes seemed beyond reach unless we increased our staff and substantially increased our funds. As one state director told me in 1995, if you want to double the number of employment outcomes for the program you need to push for more funds and more staff. Yet, substantial increases in funds and more staff were not an option so we relied on our creativity.

Limited resources do not limit our creativity unless we choose to believe that they do. This simple assertion, “Our resources may be limited but our creativity is not”, has helped us find more effective ways of operating to increase the number of consumers who achieve a Quality Employment Solution.

Here are seven examples from this past year showing how creativity has helped us move beyond limited resources.



1. We developed a more efficient way to deliver services through our employment teams. This past year, in conjunction with the Department of Education’s Reclassification Study, we developed the Service Specialist position to complement the work of the Rehabilitation Associate and Rehabilitation Specialist in our field offices. It was a significant change that required extensive input from all staff to identify and restructure the work activities of field staff. The Service Specialist position is a bachelor degree position that will complement but not replace the essential work of the Rehabilitation Specialist in determining eligibility, approving employment plans, and verifying employment outcomes.

“They helped me with interview skills, telling me the way I needed to present myself.”

Sue White
First National Bank of Omaha

For 20 years, Sue White worked in production at the same company until she injured her knee in 1992. “I had to do something different. That’s when I started talking to Voc Rehab.” Voc Rehab’s employment focus was just what she needed, with resources like Job Seeking Skills, career planning assistance and employer contacts, all tailored for people with disabilities. After trying a few different jobs, White followed a job lead from Employment Specialist Cindy Powell for a Customer Service Representative at First National Bank of Omaha Service Center in Kearney. Since September 2000, she has taken calls from customers about their credit card charges, balances and other questions. She also earns a living wage, vacation, health and retirement benefits.

SUCCESS STORY

Sue White
First National Bank of Omaha



Message...

SUCCESS STORY

"I knew that they would be helping her find the right job, so I feel they're really the ones that gave her the start in her life."

Kay Drake
Jackie's mother

Training, practice and support from Vocational Rehabilitation built Jackie Drake's confidence and made the difference in getting a job after high school. "I knew that they would be helping her find the right job, so I feel they're really the ones that gave her the start in her life," Jackie's mom said. Voc Rehab followed up on a variety of job leads and went with her to several interviews "until they found this at the hospital and it seemed to fit so well." Since 1999, Drake has worked in Nutrition and Dining Services at BryanLGH Medical Center-West in Lincoln. Jackie Nisley, Manager at BryanLGH, likes working with Voc Rehab and has hired other people with disabilities, because "The people that we've hired come in knowing that they're going to stay and do their best." Hiring decisions are easy with VR's promise of one-on-one training from job coaches for those who need a little extra time and guidance.

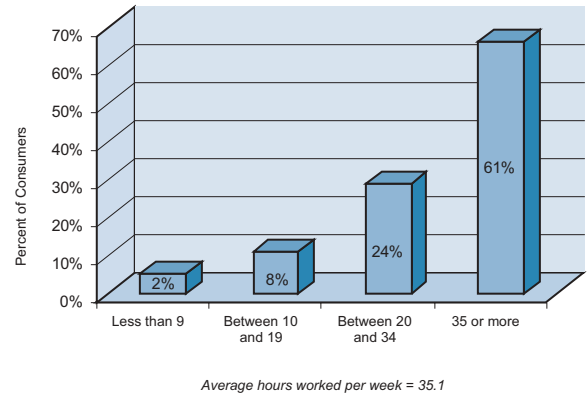
Jackie Drake
BryanLGH

Some of the benefits of this staffing improvement include access to a larger pool of applicants, significant cost saving in salary, a position that is more competitive with similar positions in the labor market, and new hires with greater work experience in placement, marketing, business operations, human services, and career planning. The Service Specialist position is a creative option that had not occurred to us until we systematically explored more cost effective ways to utilize staff strengths to deliver better services.

2. We customized new staff training to assure quality specialized services.

Hiring Service Specialists with varied degree requirements and work experience gave us an opportunity to customize new staff training to meet the wide range of consumer needs. During the past two years the training for new staff has expanded to include individualized training programs that complement and

HOURS WORKED PER WEEK



enhance the service delivery talents of each of our employment teams. Some of the training basics include instruction in our Vocational Rehabilitation processes, assessment services, career planning, independent living services, and job placement.

Training is provided for our unified consumer data system QUEST, E-mail, internal and external web services, and statewide calendaring. Training is also provided in Medical Aspects of Rehabilitation and includes a strong work implication component. Currently in development are two new training programs in basic counseling and interviewing techniques, and a program which integrates basic labor market information and career counseling in a training program entitled 'Understanding the World of Work'.

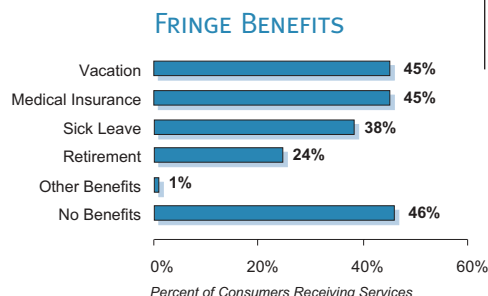
Jackie Nisley
Nutrition and Dining Services Manager
BryanLGH Medical Center

Both the Service Specialist position and the significant improvements in staff training will help us use our resources more effectively. We will be able to do a better job of selecting new staff, training them, and assuring their success as a valued employee. Our resources have been limited but our creativity has not.

3. We structured an Employment Success Planning process for consumers to increase the quality of their planning while decreasing their wait time. More than a year ago we met with several consumer focus groups to find a better way to develop the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). It was important that the process be consumer focused as well as market driven. We wanted a better way to engage consumers in their rehabilitation planning so they could make informed career decisions.

Loss of consumer input and understanding how to make an ‘informed’ decision was too often hampered by our expediency. We needed a more flexible process so consumers could move at a pace that was appropriate for them while having access to best practices in employment success planning.

The result of our innovative work is what we call the Front End Process. It incorporates a strong consumer focus, efficient integration of data, required staff documentation, and a structured way to assure best practice services for all consumers. The process includes an orientation to Vocational Rehabilitation, individual interviews to listen to the consumer’s employment hopes and concerns, prompt eligibility, a self-awareness workshop, opportunity for detailed career exploration to choose a realistic vocational goal, as well as help in identifying individual employment concerns and obtaining needed resources.



“Without Voc Rehab, I’d probably still be looking for a job,” says Chris Hattan. His learning disability “makes it kind of hard for me to understand” he says. So on-the-job training was a good way for him to try out the job at the Transportation Services Bureau (TSB) and prove himself at the same time. Since 1986, Voc Rehab and TSB have worked together to provide employment and on-the-job training in automotive repair for people with disabilities. This approach gives the employer a trial period while Voc Rehab pays for their training. TSB Garage Manager Mike Moerer says that’s one reason he likes working with Voc Rehab. “I knew with Chris, there wouldn’t be any situations where he wasn’t going to be on time because he demonstrated that during his on-the-job training.” Moerer also likes the extra support Voc Rehab provides.

“Without Voc Rehab, I’d probably still be looking for a job.”

Chris Hattan
Transportation Services Bureau

SUCCESS STORY



“I think having the job coach showed her ways to help with her speed.”

Donna Bowie
Rebecca Swanson's Mother

Through Special Education classes in school, Rebecca Swanson got connected with Voc Rehab. When she started as a high school volunteer at Tabitha Nursing and Rehabilitation Home, “They set her up with a job coach because her problem is mainly that she’s slow,” says her mother, Donnie. A job coach learns the job beforehand and trains the client one-on-one. Sometimes they find alternative ways to do the tasks if the client needs minor accommodations for their disability. In a short time, Swanson was ready to work on her own at Tabitha. Now, Swanson knows her way around Tabitha’s kitchen and plans to stay. In February 2001, Swanson was chosen out of more than 500 people as Employee of the Month.

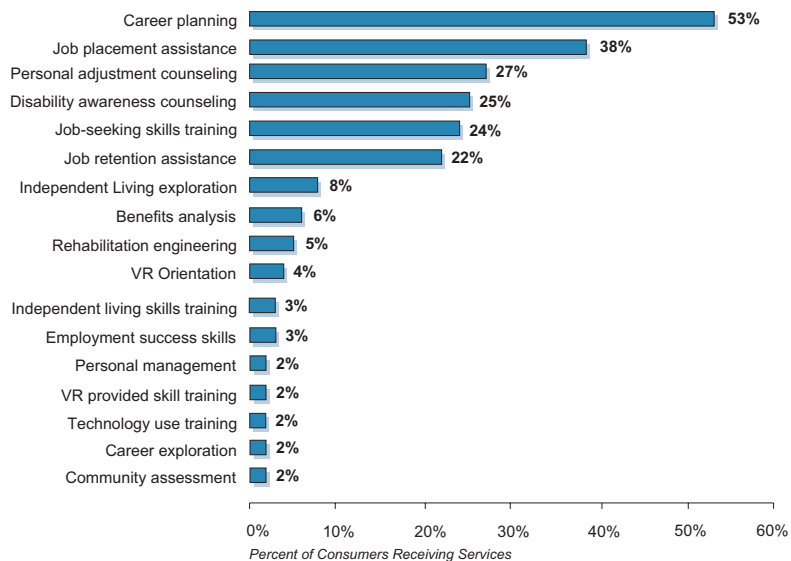
This is an innovative example of how creativity is expanding limited staff time, while greatly enhancing quality services to consumers. Our resources have been limited but our creativity has not.

4. We designed a better way to plan transition services with schools. A VR state director once told me that their state didn’t have enough resources to serve all the adult population requesting their services. So why would they try to stimulate greater awareness of VR within the schools? “We couldn’t even begin to serve all the seniors let alone those students age 14-16.” He went on to say, “The less the schools know about VR the better we will be”. We strongly disagree! This director raised an important

concern. But he was overlooking the simple fact that most of those students he said they could not serve would be served by the VR agency in a few years as an adult when they are out of school and do not have school supports. By planning early with schools, students, parents and other appropriate agencies, we are leveraging valuable time and resources that will not be available later.

Effective planning with schools is a vital long-term benefit for students and the Vocational Rehabilitation program. This past year we developed the Transition Services Planner—a guide for educators in arranging Vocational Rehabilitation services for students with disabilities.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION STAFF



This planner provides a uniform message to all educators and clearly lets them know what they can (and cannot) expect from Vocational Rehabilitation. Through the Planner, educators are assured that eligibility can be determined promptly. They are informed that the IPE needs to be completed before the student leaves school.

Staff are finding creative ways to expand our services to students with disabilities through group services, teacher assisted vocational exploration, employer tours with businesses that support student

involvement in the local business community, and incorporating our Employment Success Skills program, Self-Awareness Workshop, and Job Seeking Skills workshop into the curriculum at some schools.

5. We designed an effective option to inform and involve parents in transition planning. Based on input from consumer and parent focus groups, we developed a monthly publication for parents, students, educators and others interested in transition services.

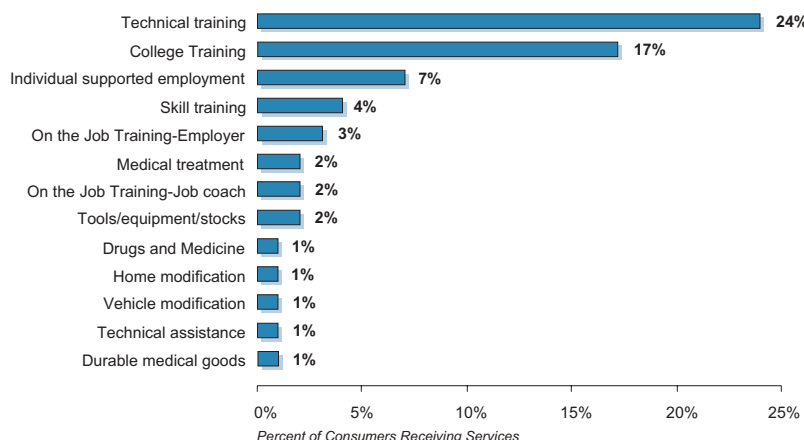
“They groom you on how to answer questions, and how to look at people because body language tells a lot. The training got me my job.”

Bev Kinzer
Shift Supervisor and Co-Manager
IBP Corporation, Norfolk

SUCCESS STORY

Unemployed for two years, Bev Kinzer of Madison found out about Voc Rehab at a local employment office. A team of professionals at Voc Rehab got her moving in the right direction. “Lisa Mitchell kept telling me ‘You can do it, you can do it,’” says Kinzer. Her disability, Degenerating Patellar Syndrome, caused gradual disintegration of her kneecap, making the physical jobs she was accustomed to difficult to continue. Kinzer tapped into VR’s Job Seeking Skills training, where she learned how to present herself, how to answer questions, and how to dress appropriately for interviews. Since May 2001, Kinzer started as a Grill Cook, was promoted to Shift Supervisor after six months, and a short time later was asked to add Co-Manager to her title, plus got a raise.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY COMMUNITY AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS



“Even though I have the illness, I want to be able to work around it as much as I can. I just couldn’t see being on social security all my life.”

Kim Bowen, Owner
Kim’s Kreative Fun

A big motivation in starting her own business was finding a way to support herself with a job that could accommodate her bi-polar disorder and depression. “A daily routine can be really difficult,” says Kim Bowen. Her disability made it hard to know if her idea was realistic, so she came to Voc Rehab for support and resources. Voc Rehab offered evaluation, career planning and follow-up services, says Specialist Anissa Wilson. Once they decided self-employment was appropriate in terms of her abilities and disability, she was ready for the planning phase. Through Voc Rehab’s self-employment program, she was able to access a business consultant for assistance and advice in developing her business plan.



Kim Bowen and her son, Skylar

The four-page publication, Making It Work– Students Planning for Success, is issued monthly. The publication raises issues that can help parents and students make more informed decisions about transition planning. The publication makes it clear that transition is the responsibility of many people and agencies. Vocational Rehabilitation is only part of the array of vital resources needed for effective planning.

6. We discovered an effective way to promote collaboration of employment services for consumers with mental illness. The Employment 2003 Initiative is a collaboration with the State Mental Health Planning and Evaluation Council and its supporting agencies and consumer members.

Through this initiative a variety of agencies are discovering how their resources can be leveraged with other agencies to enhance employment for people who experience mental illness. One of the successful projects of the Employment 2003 Initiative was the development of a model Employment Forum. Through personal invitation, key resource agencies were invited to meet and find better ways to address the employment needs of people with mental illness. The Forum did not focus on how to advocate for more money or staff. Rather, working through real life consumer employment scenarios, community agencies focused on problem solving with existing resources.

OCCUPATIONS AND EARNINGS

Occupations	Percent	Average Hourly Earnings
Service	38%	\$7.15
Office and Administrative Support	11%	\$8.44
Professional	10%	\$10.99
Sales	10%	\$7.51
Production	8%	\$8.68
Transportation and Material Moving	7%	\$9.11
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	4%	\$9.14
Management, Business, and Financial	4%	\$11.41
Construction	4%	\$9.39
Farming	3%	\$7.91

The participants clearly saw the value of their services as a resource for supporting employment. By generating a long list of resource possibilities, the work groups found creative ways to take what they had and make it more valuable for the consumer. When participants left the forum they understood why collaboration worked. This was a simple idea for promoting collaboration.

7. We are exploring more effective ways to provide team services throughout the state. Finally, this past year we have taken a closer look at how we distribute staff resources around the state. We felt we could do a better job in deploying staff, distributing territories, and better serving consumers in non-traditional ways.

Our exploration will result in closing some office locations, and serving consumers closer to their

shopping, service, and employment areas. Additionally, we are exploring better ways to provide group services, focus resources at select itinerate locations, set up Employment Success Centers in our field offices, and connect important planning and service activities for the consumer with support through our recently established Web Cam system.

Because of a shortfall in State funds our resources in FY2003 may be less then they were in FY2002. But we will continue to be an effective program and do the best we can with what we have. We will not use the excuse of limited resources as a reason to 'wait for better times'. Next year promises to be an exciting year and we will continue to make significant progress with what we have. As in the past, our resources will probably be limited – but our creativity will not.

“The joint effort of so many who are dedicated to students’ success was instrumental...”

Jayne Brunke-Proskocil
VR Specialist

SUCCESS STORY

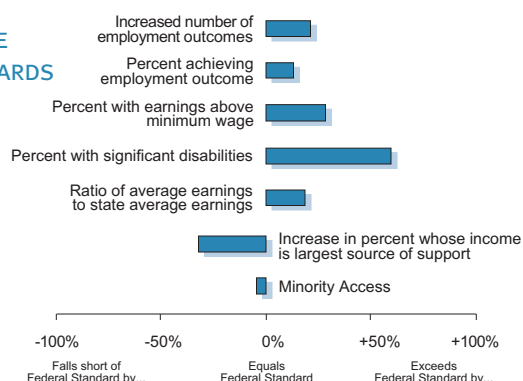


Tim Stone
Apprentice



Tim Stone is an excellent example of a student who had a smooth transition from high school to a job. Thanks to the careful planning of Tim, his family, Axtell High School, Voc Rehab, and Educational Service Unit #11, Tim has been employed full time since graduating in May of 2002. He has a learning disability that results in limitations in listening and written expression skills. VR Specialist Jayne Brunke-Proskocil began working with Tim in his junior year, providing career counseling and supportive services. In his senior year, Tim began a plumbing apprenticeship with Anderson Brothers Electric, Plumbing & Heating, Inc. Brunke-Proskocil summed it up by saying, “I believe the joint effort of so many who are dedicated to students’ success was instrumental in Tim’s situation.”

2002 PERFORMANCE ON FEDERAL STANDARDS



“I had tried many jobs before, and I was never able to hold down a job.”

Sharon Griffiths
Cirrus House

For more than a year, Sharon Griffiths has worked full-time at Cirrus House with vacation, sick leave, health and retirement benefits. “I’ve gotten completely off of government benefits,” she says. Byron Barkeloo of Voc Rehab gave her a lot of employer contacts, says Griffiths, and got her in touch with Stephanie Black, Cirrus House Employment Coordinator. Cirrus House offers psycho-social support for people with mental illness, focusing on employment so people can live independently and be part of the community. Together, the three worked to secure transitional jobs, training and experience, which eventually led to a competitive job for Griffiths. Griffiths started as a Cirrus House member herself eight years ago, and now she helps guide others who are getting started.

SUCCESS STORY



Sharon Griffiths
Cirrus House

Linda Gilson
Cirrus House

Annual Program Costs

	Cost of Program
Administration	\$3,017,730.00

CLIENT SERVICES

	Cost of Program
Provided by VR Staff	\$7,943,401.00
Purchased from Community Rehab Programs	\$1,226,278.00
Purchased from Other Vendors	\$3,011,420.00
Innovation and Expansion of Services	\$638,196.00
All other Client Services	\$160,421.00
Total	\$12,979,716.00

PURCHASED FOR CLIENTS

	Cost of Program
Assessment	\$161,919.00
Higher Education	\$1,227,949.00
Miscellaneous Training	\$1,449,020.00
Maintenance	\$89,213.00
Personal Assistance Services	\$18,181.00
Transportation	\$143,918.00
Rehabilitation Technology Services	\$871,546.00
Post Employment	\$197,339.00
Small Business Enterprise	\$159,685.00
All Other Services	\$1,124,174.00
Total	\$5,442,944.00

SRC Committee Reports

Interagency Committee

The Interagency Committee continued efforts this year to improve communication and coordination with other agencies, and to ensure Council members were informed on statewide efforts related to the Workforce Investment Act. Updates were received by the committee regarding the state's Ticket To Work status, pending activities to implement the Ticket, and its potential impact on the state VR agency. This information was passed along to all SRC members.

The committee maintained close contact with the State Independent Living Council (SILC). Updates were provided on VR's Transition from School to Work efforts and coordination with secondary schools. The Interagency Committee also accepted the responsibility of reviewing the Annual Report. Another important goal of the Interagency Committee was to analyze referral and employment data from the state

agency. The Committee began to analyze referrals by referral source, and to compare that to employment outcomes by referral source. Based on this information, the committee decided to conduct a survey of agencies and organizations that refer clients to VR. The Committee developed a two-page survey and secured feedback from the entire Council before finalizing the format. The survey will be mailed to hundreds of referral sources to gather information regarding their knowledge of VR, the quality of their relationship with VR, and their thoughts on strengthening that relationship. The surveys will be mailed in January 2003, and the information analyzed by May of 2003. The Committee will report back to the Council by August 2003.

SUCCESS STORY

*"I wanted to work.
I wanted to make
something of myself..."*

Elizabeth Dugger
SPEAK OUT

"When I tried to write my own resume, I kept getting stymied because I thought 'There's nothing good about me. Why would anybody want to hire me?' Elizabeth Dugger connected with Nebraska Voc Rehab and got the support she needed. "They helped me to sort out all the good points... to see my strengths at a time in my life when I could not." Dugger was battling physical problems aggravated by years of manual labor. For college and living expenses, Voc Rehab linked her with the Pell Grant program, Job Training Partnership Act, and helped cover tuition and fees. "By them doing that, it enabled me to go to school full time and enabled my AFDC stipend (welfare) to go that much further so that I could make it," says Dugger. When she graduated in Spring 2001, she already had a job as Executive Director and Family Resource Coordinator for SPEAK OUT, a program for families of children with mental, emotional or behavioral disorders. "I hated being on government benefits. I wanted to work. I wanted to make something of myself... It is fantastic to not have agencies' intervention in my life. I feel good about myself all the time now. ...I know that I have come so far that I will never end up in that position again."

Elizabeth Dugger
Executive Director/
Family Resource Coordinator
SPEAK OUT



SRC Committee Reports

CONSUMERS SERVED BY LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

District	Total	Percent
1	105	1.9
2	54	1.0
3	52	1.0
4	41	0.8
5	45	0.8
6	63	1.2
7	76	1.4
8	58	1.1
9	142	2.6
10	40	0.7
11	158	2.9
12	44	0.8
13	56	1.0
14	32	0.6
15	76	1.4
16	91	1.7
17	108	2.0
18	179	3.3
19	327	6.0
20	44	0.8
21	78	1.4
22	148	2.7
23	87	1.6
24	126	2.3
25	79	1.5
26	115	2.1
27	111	2.0
28	264	4.9
29	113	2.1
30	93	1.7
31	35	0.6
32	98	1.8
33	265	4.9
34	99	1.8
35	252	4.6
36	164	3.0
37	214	3.9
38	163	3.0
39	39	0.7
40	144	2.7
41	109	2.0
42	134	2.5
43	114	2.1
44	65	1.2
45	70	1.3
46	63	1.2
47	76	1.4
48	172	3.2
49	96	1.8
Unknown	52	1.0

Strategic Issues Committee

The Strategic Issues Committee was established to identify and review external influences that will impact employment for persons with disabilities, and to recommend appropriate action to enhance these employment opportunities. Three priority areas were identified: Ticket to Work, Special Education and Rural Issues (changing demographics). Designated committee members tracked pertinent legislation, initiatives, and information regarding the priority areas. Based on this information the Committee has recommended:

- A representative participate in the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to provide input on strategies to revise the Medicaid system to facilitate employment feasibility.
- A publication be developed to provide more information on transition services for students with disabilities and their parents.
- Information be developed and distributed on transition services targeted to students with disabilities who are at-risk of dropping out.
- Shifting state demographics and economic factors should be a consideration in future strategies for employment services delivery.

Client Service Delivery Committee

This year the Client Service Delivery Committee 1) reviewed and completed a survey related to VR orientation; and 2) developed and implemented a survey focused on customer services.

VR Orientation Survey: The survey questionnaire was designed for consumers to complete after attending VR orientation. Results of the survey indicated consumers:

- feel three weeks is too long to wait to get into orientation;
- are overwhelmingly satisfied with the value of the orientation presentation;
- feel the employment warranty section of the orientation was the most helpful;
- would like more information on training/school and how to get a job.

Customer Service Survey: A majority of the committee's time was spent developing, mailing and compiling the results of a satisfaction survey. The survey was mailed to clients who already have a plan written or are in plan development. The types of questions asked were customer service related.

Examples of some of the questions were: Did staff return phone calls right away? Do they attend your appointments on time? Do they listen to you? Do they quickly meet your needs?

The Committee reviewed the results of the survey and forwarded the information to Office Directors. Feedback was requested regarding any changes or action initiated as a result of the survey. Based on the feedback received from Office Directors and council members, the Committee:

- 1) recommended Office Directors address with their staff the importance of customer service as it relates to returning phone calls, updating voice mail, and enlisting other staff in returning phone calls.
- 2) supported the customer service initiative VR is currently engaged in, and recommended the initiative continue. Updates on the results of the initiative will be provided to the council.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee operated as an oversight committee, ensuring the council was organized in its meetings and addressing issues applicable to employment for persons with disabilities.

To accomplish this, the

Executive Committee:

- met before and after each SRC meeting to discuss and evaluate the meeting, and to identify agenda items for the next meeting.
- ensured that the SRC maintained direct involvement in the State Plan by reviewing the goals and objectives with the help of staff.
- encouraged SRC members to participate on agency committees, including appointing an SRC member to participate in all Joint Agency Meetings to gather public comment on services for persons with disabilities.
- disseminated progress reports from the Parent Training Center, Assistive Technology, Client Assistance Program, State Workforce Investment Board, Statewide Independent Living Council, Special Education Transition Program, and Voc Rehab counselors and independent service providers.

Our committee, SRC, and Voc Rehab will continue to work for quality employment services for all Nebraskans who experience a disability.

“They bombarded me with encouragement. It helped me maintain my positive mental attitude.”

Casey Jones
Vocational Rehabilitation Team,
Norfolk

Hand, back and neck injuries sustained in the Vietnam War eliminated any physical jobs Casey Jones might have otherwise considered. Jones was living in South Dakota and worked with their Voc Rehab agency and the Veteran’s Administration to find a new career, eventually getting his AAS degree in Accounting. The job market was better in Nebraska, and Jones chose to target the Norfolk area. He started working with Lisa Mitchell at the local Voc Rehab office and visited Voc Rehab every week with updates on his applications. When a position opened up at Voc Rehab, Jones interviewed and was offered the job. Since August 2000, Jones has worked for Voc Rehab entering information in the computer system, answering phones, greeting the public and transcribing messages. In addition, he introduces clients to employers and works with them one-on-one for on the job training at worksites. A positive attitude and career flexibility led Casey Jones to a job he loves.



SUCCESS STORY

Casey Jones
Voc Rehab

State Rehabilitation Council Members

October 1, 2001—September 30, 2002

CONTACT INFORMATION:

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) values the input and involvement of all citizens in Nebraska regarding rehabilitation services. All SRC meetings are open to the public and are a great opportunity for the public to voice concerns.

MEETINGS:

Meeting dates, times and locations are posted on the Vocational Rehabilitation web site at vocrehab.state.ne.us.

WRITE:

State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson
Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509

CALL:

402.471.8663
800.742.7594 (V/TTY)

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Eighty-two percent of the cost for the Nebraska Vocational Rehabilitation program, or \$12 million, was derived from Federal government funding.

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Business

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Mary Dale Christensen

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Parent Training Center/Consumer

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